

Today, I released a study that estimates the economic costs associated with several diseases and disabilities attributable to environmental contaminants in Washington State, including asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancer, lead exposure, birth defects, and neurobehavioral effects.

The study used recognized and conservative methodology from an earlier study conducted by Dr. Phil Landrigan of Mount Sinai Medical School in New York, on the national costs of childhood diseases attributable to contaminants. The study has been reviewed and supported by Dr. Landrigan, as well as a health economist at UW, the Director of Environmental Health Assessments at the Department of Health and several leading environmental and health organizations in WA.

The study concludes that the 'best estimate' of the annual cost of childhood diseases and disabilities attributable to environmental contaminants in Washington State is \$1.875 billion in 2004\$. This comprises \$0.311 billion in direct health care costs and \$1.565 billion in indirect costs from lost productivity.

The study also concludes that the ‘best estimate’ of the annual cost of adult and childhood diseases and disabilities is \$2.734 billion. This comprises \$0.782 billion in direct health care costs and \$1.953 billion in indirect costs.

To put these costs in context, the estimate for childhood diseases and disabilities is equivalent to 0.7% of the total Washington Gross State Product and the estimate for adult and childhood diseases and disabilities is equivalent to about 1%.

Looking at direct health care costs, the estimated cost of childhood diseases and disabilities attributable to environmental contaminants is approximately 1.9% of the total Washington State health expenditures and the direct costs for child and adult diseases and disabilities are approximately 4.9%.

These cost estimates are consistent with the results of other similar studies and that, like the previous studies, a significant proportion of the estimated costs can be attributed to lead exposure.

These costs are run into billions of dollars a year and they are being born by all of us, as a society. Phasing out and reducing toxic chemicals in Washington State clearly makes economic sense, in terms of health care savings and

increasing state productivity, as well as making sense in terms of protecting our health and the environment.

Of course, monetary valuations of diseases and disabilities are only part of the picture. They do not take account of people's suffering or the emotional costs to families and friends.

But it is vitally important to consider these very significant costs as WA State moves to adopt a Rule on PBT's. Up until now, cost benefit analyses have been very one-sided because they have only considered the costs to industry. They have not taken account of the health and related costs of continuing to use of toxics. This study is the first study in WA State to do this. And even though we will never know the exact costs of the diseases and disabilities resulting from toxics, just as we will never know the exact costs of controlling them, it is vitally important that estimates of health costs are considered in policy decisions.

WA State has an opportunity to do exactly that – right here and right now. The proposed Rule on PBT's **must** be based on the health costs and related productivity losses of the continued use of toxic chemicals, as well as information on the costs of control.

Specifically, section WAC 173-333-420, which discusses the contents of a Chemical Action Plan, should be amended to ensure that health costs from the continued use of toxics are always considered in making decisions about controlling and eliminating them.

This section of the draft Rule states that:

“In assessing economic impacts under subsection (1)(f)(i)(C) of this section, Ecology will identify costs of implementing the recommendations (of the CAP). This **may** include a qualitative and/or quantitative analysis of the probable **benefits and costs** of the CAP.”

Given that the health costs and productivity losses from toxic chemicals cost our state billions of dollars a year, as shown by my study, the draft Rule should be amended to ensure that these costs are considered in all Plans to eliminate and reduce toxics.

In closing, I urge WA State to adopt a strong Rule to phase out and reduce the use of toxics. It makes good economic sense, as well as safeguarding our health, the health of our children and the environment.

Thank you.